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ABSTRACT

Criticisms of the one-way flow of international information were first voiced in the 1940s, when, in the name of free flow of information and worldwide access to news, the United States launched an offensive to dismantle European news cartels. At a UNESCO conference in 1945, the United States was chiefly responsible for making the free flow of information a UNESCO objective; it has remained one ever since. The first UNESCO reference to a change in western control of information was made in 1969 following an influx of developing nations into the organization, when resentments bred by information flow imbalances spawned a series of proposals to correct them. It is observed that western discussion of this new world information order has generally been couched in Cold War rhetoric, including charges that the proposals are Soviet inspired and supported. U. S. news agencies and journalistic organizations have led this opposition, pressuring the U. S. government to air its views to UNESCO. Although Third World arguments today resemble those used to indict the European cartels in the 1940s, the U. S. media neither treat the debate objectively nor acknowledge criticism of their position. It is normal for the U. S. media and government to be reluctant to support a course that, though just, seems to counter their economic and political interests. But if America is to maintain and expand its trade and political influence in developing countries, it has to be more sensitive to their problems than it has been in the New World Information Order debate. (HTH)

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SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI AT COLUMBIA
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THE U.S., ITS PRESS, AND THE NEW WORLD INFORMATION ORDER

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CENTER REPORT NO. 488

This report was written by Francis N. Wete, a doctoral student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

Since the mid 1940s, the United States has been the champion of communications as a means of international exchange of information and ideas. But on examination, it now appears that the genesis and extension of the free flow of information concept are parts of the strategy for U.S. global hegemony.

During the past decade, developing countries have been complaining about the role of the international press in their part of the world. The complaints include negative portrayal of the Third World, cultural domination of its peoples through the pervasiveness of foreign media and the monopoly of the international news agencies.

These grievances have become the bases of the debate taking place within UNESCO and the call for a new world information order.

Without denying these charges specifically, the Western press, led by the United States, appears to have transformed the issues to institutionalized control of the press, licensing of journalists, mandatory code of ethics, censorship and other formulations considered inimical to freedom of the press.

There are undeniable imbalances in the North-South flow of information. Equally irrefutable is the fact that the imbalances favor the North and disfavor the South. In a concerted effort to redress the situation, the international community has been seeking to determine the root causes and to find solutions to the unequal flow of international communication.

A fundamental consideration is the need to awaken the public to the existence of the problem so as to enlist their support for the sacrifices that might be necessary to solve it. Essential to this public information campaign is an objective and accurate reporting of the discussions about the issue.

The purpose of the present paper is to investigate, through an analytical survey of the literature, how the West, specifically the United States and its press, has portrayed the debate on the new world information order.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Criticisms of the one-way flow of international communication were first conceived and elaborated in the 1940s while England was still a major economic power and when the United States was still militarily, diplomatically and economically unchallenged. Servan-Schrieber called this period "the American challenge,"[1] in which the United States was the challenger, not the challenged.[2]

Schiller has suggested that the policy of a free flow of information was "one of a very few indispensable prerequisites" for the "imperial ascendancy of the U.S."[3] He noted that the private interests of U.S. mass media organizations also were served by this policy. It was a propitious time to extol the virtues of unrestricted movement of information and resources. Nazi occupation had traumatized Europe and a good part of the rest of the world. Thus, freedom of information and movement were highly desirable. Under these circumstances, Schiller notes, it was relatively easy to confuse truly national needs with private business objectives. Moreover, the decisive role played by the British worldwide communications network had not escaped attention in the United States:

> It was against these finely spun, structural ties that an American offensive was mounted. Conveniently the attack could avail itself of the virtuous language and praiseworthy objectives of 'free flow of information' and 'worldwide access to news'."[4]

Clearly, the underlying motive was to break the international grip of the European news cartels. Kent Cooper, executive managing editor of the Associated Press (AP) had written about the limitations Reuter, Havas and Wolff (now Agence France Presse,AFP) posed for the activities of the AP.[5] Cooper indicted the European news cartels for keeping

Summary:

The case for a new world information order is reminiscent of the U.S. arguments for breaking the European news cartels in the 1940s. For economic motives, the author contends, the American press has emasculated the essence of the new information order debate.

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the AP out of the race for dissemination of information to the world:

> In precluding the Associated Press from disseminating news abroad, Reuter and Havas (French) served three purposes: 1) they kept out Associated Press competition; 2) they were free to present American news disparagingly to the United States if they presented it at all; 3) they could present news of their own countries most favorably and without it being contradicted. Their own countries were always glorified. This was done by reporting great advances at home in English and French civilizations, the benefits of which would, of course, be bestowed on the world.[6]

Both the U.S. press groups and government soon found others in the country who recongized the advantages that worldwide communciations control bestowed on foreign trade and export.[7] **Business Week** commented:

> In peacetime, reduced costs of messages will energize our trade, support our propaganda, bolster business for all the lines.[8]

The British were not unaware of American motives in this campaign. The **Economist** (London) reacted to Cooper's "free flow of information drive":

> The huge financial resources of the American agencies might enable them to dominate the world...(Cooper), like most big business executives, experiences a peculiar moral glow in finding that his idea of freedom coincides with his commercial advantage...Democracy does not necessarily mean making the whole world safer for the AP.[9]

In 1946, William Benton, the Assistant Secretary of State who greatly influenced U.S. policy on communications after the second World War, outlined the government's position on the meaning of freedom of communications:

> The State Department plans to do everything within its power along political or diplomatic lines to help break down the artificial barriers to the expansion of private American news agencies, magazines, motion pictures and other media of communications throughout the world...Freedom of the press–and freedom of exchange of information generally–is an intergral part of our foreign policy.[10]

Although the economic motives of the free flow of infromation policy were no secret, the media neither dwelt on the self-serving nature of its widely proclaimed principle nor made the implications of the policy explicit to the public.

> Instead, a remarkable political campaign was organized by the big press associations and publishers with the support of industry in general, to elevate the isssue of free flow of information to the highest level of national and international principle. This served a handsome pair of objectives. It rallied public opinion to the support of a commercial goal expressed as an ethical imperataive. Simultaneously, it provided a highly effective ideological club against the Soviet Union and its newly created neighboring zone of anticipated influence.[11]

Having sought and secured government endorsement of their aims, the American Society of Newspaper Editors, meeting in November, 1944, then declared:

> ...most Americans and their newspapers will support government policies...and action toward removal of all political, legal and economic barriers to the media of information, and...our Government should make this abundantly clear to other nations.[12]

At the constitutional conference of UNESCO in London, 1945, the United States chiefly was responsible for making the free flow of information a UNESCO objective. Article I, Section 2 of the UNESCO charter states that the Organization

> "will collaborate in the work of advancing mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communications, and to that end, (will) recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image.[13]

A year later, the United States tried to follow this mandate by proposing that the Organization establish a worldwide communications system at a cost of about $250 million.[14] The British objected strenuously to the proposal, charging that the United States was attempting to use UNESCO "to blitz the world with American ideas," and the plan was dropped.[15]

However, the United States did not give up producing material for UNESCO radio program that even friendly editorial comment in Western Europe called "American propaganda." U.S. newspapers supported this effort, especially during the Korean War, with headlines such as "U.S. Looks To UNESCO To Tell Korean Truth" and "UNESCO's Aid Sought Along The Propaganda Front."

A reaction by the **London News Chronicle** struck a note of warning:

> American insistence that UNESCO enter the Cold War by spreading pr-Western, anti-Communiste propaganda is providing a crisis which may wreck the Organization.

Although UNESCO actions were criticized frequently by the world press as reflecting too strongly U.S. foreign policy and ideologies, an AP story quoted Benton, who has since become a Senator, denouncing UNESCO's "aloofness" and demanding that it recognized "its role as a political instrument of the Cold War."[17].

Commenting on the work of the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information held in Geneva March 25-April 21, 1948, the **Economist** (London) noted:

> ...it was the impression of most delegations that the Americans wanted to secure for their news agencies that general freedom of the market for the most efficient which has been the object of all their initiatives in commercial policy–that they regard freedom of information as an extension of the charter of the International Trade Organization rather than as a special and important subject of its own. And the stern opposition which they offered Indian and Chinese efforts to protect infant national news agencies confirmed this impression.[18]

This assessment reflected the continuing ambivalence of the United States' West European allies toward the issue of free flow of information. Though fully aware of the commercial threat the free flow doctrine posed to their own communications industries, faced with the United States' media power, the Western market economies, especially Great Britain, nonetheless supported the principle as a means of embarassing the Soviet sphere and placing it on theideological defensive.

DECOLONIZATION, MASS MEDIA AND DEVELOPMENT

In 1963, a statement by the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO clearly encouraged UN system involvement in communication issues. Two years earlier, UNESCO had issued a report stating "the firm conviction that there is a clear and reciprocal relationship between the development of information media and economic and technical development."[19] In 1962, the U.N. General Assembly endorsed the principle that "development of communications media was part of overall development" and recommended that "technical assistance be made available for the purpose of improving media facilities." The U.S. National Commission for UNESCO statement in 1963 noted these actions "with satisfaction" and recognized "information media development as a necessity for economic growth."[20] UNESCO was popular in America.

Against this background came the decolonization decade of the sixties when some 70 former colonies gained their independence and became members of UNESCO. The new nations joined the international community with demands that threatened the status quo.

THE DEBATE

According to Mehan, the first reference to a change in the information order was made in 1969 at a UNESCO meeting in Montreal. The meeting introduced the concept of "two-way circulation of news and balanced circulation of news."[21] In 1970, at the 16th General Conference of UNESCO, the Director General was asked "to help member states in formulating their mass communications policies." This as the genesis of the current international information flow debate. It has been on the UNESCO agenda ever since. For more than a decade, the resentments bred by the imbalances in the flow of information spawned a series of proposals to correct it. Of these, the Mass Media Declaration, the MacBride Report and the International Program for the Development of Communications are easily the best known.

But when the communications debate burst upon U.S. public awareness at the 1976 UNESCO General Conference in Nairobi, most of what preceded it was largely unknown to all but a few academicians.[22] Charles W. Bray III, Deputy Director of the International Communication Agency explained the reason for this late start:

> The reply of the U.S. was at first to stand aloof. The regime for information interchange had already been established, its name was freedom, and we saw no need for any declaration or arrangements.[23]

From the standpoint of the Third World, a good deal is wrong with the "old," and still prevailing, order. In terms of news and news coverage, the overwhelming majority of world news flows from the developed to the developing countries and is generated by four large transnational news agencies–AP, UPI, AFP and Reuters. Moreover, the West dominates the use of satellites, the electromagnetic spectrum controlling the use of airwaves, telecommunications, micro-electronics, remote sensinig capabilities, direct satellite broadcasting and computer related transmission.

Implicit in the quest for a new world information order is an awareness of the differences in media functions in various countries throughout the world. These differences are particularly evident in developing nations that are consciously using their communication systems as tools to promote national growth. A basic tenet that each nation has the right to determine what the communication system within its boundaries shall be, what shall be communicated and to what end emerged in large part from the increasing concerns of the non-aligned nations.

Another basic assumption of the new information order is that the best technology for conveying information rests in the hands of the developed nations. Because information brings power to those who have it and can control it most effectively, current technology concentrates economic, educational and other informational power in the developed world. This state of affairs makes developing nations knowledge colonies. For example, the developed nations have selected and claimed the best frequencies and left the rest of the world at a disadvantage in developing their communicaton systems.

Discussion of the new world information order in the West " has generally been couched in a great deal fo the Cold War rhetoric; debate system includes charges that the proposals are Soviet inspired and supported."[24] On the contrary, as Pabst and Picard note, the Soviet Union and its allies "may find that it works against them since it advances principles of non-alignment and favors reduction of the influence of the super powers in communication."[25] Elie Abel, the U.S. member of the MacBride Commission also rejected suggestions of Soviet collusion. He said, "we are dealing with a genuine Third World movement to gain control of its future. At times the Third World decisions are as offensive to the Russians as they are to us–although for different reasons."[26]

Western opposition to the new information order has been led by the U.S. news agencies and journalistic organizations, which belatedly entered the debate in the mid 1970s. They began pressuring the U.S. government to air its views in UNESCO forums when it appeared that the government was not taking a strong stand against the Order's proposals.

PRESS COVERAGE

U.S. press coverage of UNESCO Conferences since 1976 has focused on the subject of the new world information order, almost to the exclusion of everything else. The main themes of the debate were presented in terms of "government control of information", "licensing of journalists", "censorship", "mandatory code of ethics" and other formulations believed to endanger press freedom instead of the equitable distribution of the capacity to communicate and a balanced flow of information.

On May 17, 1980, **Editor and Publisher** commented on the MacBride Report. which was not yet published:

> "Whether you have read it or not, the IPI, ANPA, ASNE, IAPA, the World Press Freedom Committe believe there is enough wrong with it to constitute a threat to the existence of a free press everywhere."[28]

Ten days later, the **Editor and Publisher** lead story was devoted to Western criticism of the MacBride Report. Newspaper publishers of 33 Western nations attending a meeting held in Tel Aviv were urged to "ring the alarm" against several proposals contained in the report. "All the proposals are dangerous," said Allen H. Neuhrath. President of the Gannett Newspaper chain and chairman of the Executive Committee of the American Newspaper Publishers Association.[29] He said proposals such as those advocating for the media to promote social, cultural, economic and political goals set by the governments–and creating a UNESCO agency that "could become an international organization to control and watch over the news media"– are "in opposition to the concept of freedom of the press."[30]

MacBride wondered whether these critics actually read the Report. The U.S. government had admitted on April 11, 1980 that the final result of the Report will be:

> "remarkably favorable to our interests. Censorship is gone, licensing of journalists and similar nostrums are gone; there is a robust commitment to a fully functioning free press. There is even a recognition of the right to access to diverse sources of opinion within a country, to which the Soviet delegate was alone in footnoting strenuous objection."[31]

The World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC), the leading American media organization combatting the establishment of the new world information order, claims credit for helping to tone down the "radical Third World" input in the MacBride Report.[32] With a contigency of 30 journalistic organizations from five continents, the World Press Freedom Committee was established in October 1973 by U.S. publishers and media owners to "work to moderate the Third World demands in UNESCO."[33] Funded mostly by foundations, the WPFC considers that "a new order with UNESCO doing the balancing is no way to correct the imbalance."[34]

Although the U.S. government and Western press associations reacted to the MacBride Report with caution, the U.S. press reacted with rage, panic and considerable bias. With conspicuous uniformity, the U.S. media accused UNESCO of being the archenemy of freedom of the press.[35]

This reaction raised questions about the fairness with which divergent viewpoints on the communications issue were being conveyed to the U.S. public via the mass media. Concern was expressed that one-sided news coverage might aggravate the difficulties of reaching agreement. More specifically, there was concern that the fears held by publishers, editors and reporters of the perceived dangers inherent in any governmental intrusion into the news field might be impeding adequate and fair coverage of all the issues involved in the debate.

After the 1980 UNESCO General Conference held in Belgrade, the National News Council conducted a study of the U.S. coverage of that meeting. The findings of the study were reported by A.H. Raskin,[36] deputy director of the Council. The Council examined 448 news clippings and 206 editorials from newspapers in all parts of the country. About 80 percent of the news stories were from the Asssociated Press and the United Press International (UPI).

During the six-week Conference, no story treated any of the reports, speeches or resolutions on UNESCO's basic activities in combatting illiteracy, developing alternate energy sources, protecting historic monunments, broadening educational programs for scientist and engineers, and scores of other fields. By contrast there were 173 news and feature stories and 183 editorials dealing with the debate over communications policy. The editorials all expressed apprehension about UNESCO's involvement in attempts to establish policy in matters affecting the worldwide flow of information. In 158 cases, the editorials were strongly hostile to the point, in 27 papers, of suggesting U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO if it persisted in moves deemed destructive of press freedom.

The news events that got the widest press use and the greatest prominence tended to be those that reinforced the fears expressed on editorial pages. One AP story (Oct. 21, 1980) covered in 15 papers appeared in differing versions for morning and afternoon subscribers. The lead for morning papers read: "Communist and Third World members of UNESCO override Western objectives and pushed through several proposals to break what they consider the West's dominance of global communicatons and international news distribution." In the evening story, the lead had been sharpened to read: "Communist and Third World nations used their majority in UNESCO to pass resolutions aimed at getting more control over international news reporting." Raskin notes that this revision prompted headlines such as the one in the Helena, Montana, **Independent-Record** that read, "UNESCO Votes to Muzzle Press."

A notable exception was an AP interview with Herve Bourge, a spokesman for the Director General Amadou-Martah M'Bow, who insisted that UNESCO had intention of trying to regulate the flow of international news or to establish government control over the news media. Thirteen papers carried the story and several gave it substantial space. On the other hand, a similar interview with M'Bow at the close of the Conference (October 30), which UPI carried, was used in only four papers covered by the Council survey. Similarly, the approval by the Conference of a modified version of a U.S. proposal for the establishment of the International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC), one of the major accomplishments of the meeting and one of the most important developments in the communications debate in years, "went almost unreported."

As Raskin notes, the tendency of the U.S. press to focus on negative aspects of the UNESCO role in mass media brought reactions not only by champions of the proposed new order but also by many who view the concept with re-

serve. Leonard R. Sussman, executive director of Freedom House in New York who spoke at Belgrade as representative of the Inter-American Press Association, expressed approval for projects involving technical assistance to Third World journalists. But the only things included in the AP account were his warnings to UNESCO to shun any moves toward licensing or monitoring journalists.

"Every word in the account was absolutely accurate," Sussman said, "but it was unbalanced in its total effect."[37] He deplored the extent to which that approach is, in his view, characteristic of most of the reporting on the UNESCO information debate.

Sussman conducted an independent survey of U.S. newspaper coverage of the UNESCO Conference related solely to articles and editorials on the communications debate.[38] His survey showed that 38 of 63 news accounts examined (60 percent) were "unfavorable" in their general reporting of the conference, 5 (8 percent) as "favorable" and 20 (32 percent) as "balanced". Of the editorials in 37 papers he studied, 34 (92 percent) "strongly attacked" the work of the conference. One was "favorable" in his view and two were "balanced".

Sussman's assessment of U.S. press handling of the Belgrade developments is of particular interest because he and his organization[39] are in the forefront of the campaign against UNESCO's current role in the mass media:

> The coverage was unbalanced because many reports of the events at Belgrade emphasized the dire potentialities of press controls as though they had already materialized. Votes taken or a consensus reached were faithfully reported. But all of these actions were directed toward further studies and meetings over the next three years. These actions unquestionably target the free press for future governmental restrictions or, at last, repressive standards however enforced. This is undeniably a threat– but too often the reports and certainly the headlines gave the impression doomsday had already arrived. Neither public understanding nor an effective defense of press freedom is hepled by exaggerating the present state of challenge.[40]

Gatekeeping contributed much to the unbalanced coverage. Raskine recounts how a UPI story written on Dec. 10, 1980 on the approval by the U.N. General Assembly Special political committeeof a consensus statement endorsing the MacBride Report and the UNESCO initiative for a new world information order was treated. UPI carried the report on its national wire with a slug calling it to the attention of editors and publishers but it got almost no attention.[41] Similarly, Mehan points out that the National News Council Report on the Belgrade Conferencenews coverage is virtually unknown in the United States, although it is quoted extensively at the United Nations, and has received attention in the press of other countries. He states that despite AP and UPI wire stories on the Council Report, almost no U.S. newspapers used the Council Report in its coverage of UNESCO.[42]

GOVERNMENT-PRESS ALLIANCE

Having realized that the feeling about communications inequality was strong, the United States began to change course, beginning with the 1976 Nairobi Conference.

> What we did was to admit the existence of disparities and dependencies in communication and information capacity. But we suggested that instead of cutting back the information power of the few, we all join forces to build up the information capacity of the many.[43]

Press pressures have since compelled the U.S. to retract from that commitment. The IPDC which the United States initiated in 1978, has been a pain in the neck of the American government virtually since the proposal was made. The United States had conceived of the IPDC as a clearing house for funding from other sources, serving as a broker between developing countries and existing funding organizations. With the insistence of Third World nations, it has evolved more direct funding mechanisms and a special account has been established to accept contributions.

> In the value-laden area of communications, it is certainly possible that some IPDC projects will become ideologically contemtuous. Direct U.S. government funding for such projects would simply be unacceptable to the U.S. media as well as the Congress and the executive branch. U.S. support for the overall concept of the IPDC would be short-lived.[44]

The failure to meet the commitment to support the IPDC is far less due to the possibility of ideologically distasteful projects than to self-serving motives by the U.S. press. Block, a State Department official, notes that U.S. media, particularly the World Press Freedom Committee and to a lesser extent the American Society of Newspaper Editors attend meetings on the world communications debate to monitor U.S. positions and any giving ground on the freedom of information principle would be flashed back home for the expected fireworks to occur.[45] He adds that the U.S. media community "is remarkably weighted in this area."

Following the Belgrade Conference, the collision course ploy continued to gain momentum. In April 1981, a group of Western journalists met at Talloires in the French Alps and issued what has been called the Declaration of Talloires. The Declaration of Talloires expressed the Western media objections to many of the fundamental ideas of the MacBride Report. It not only resurrected the original Western formulation of "free flow" but, as Kusum and Gross noted, conspicuously dropped the words "and balanced."

Without specifically referring to the Report's critique of commercialization, monopoly or bureacracy, the signatories affirmed uncompromising allegiance to "the importance of advertising as a consumer service and in providing for a strong and self-sustaining press." Omitting comment on the Report's plea for the democratization of communication, they supported "the universal right to be freely informed" and opposed "any interference with this fundamental right." Without mentioning the Report's comments on self-censorship they called for the elimination of "censorship and other forms of arbitrary control of information and opinion." On ethics and licensng, they were very explicit:

> There can be no international code of ethics; the plurality of views makes this impossible...licensing of journalists by national or international bodies should not be sanctioned; nor should special requirements be demanded of journalists in lieu of licensing them. Such measures submit journalists

> to controls and pressures inconsistent with a free press.

Within a year of the Talloires declaration, a group of prominent American international affairs experts issued a report on U.S. policy toward the United Nations. Among other things, the report deplores "the efforts by the Soviet Union and some Third World governments to legitimize under the rubric of a 'New International Information Order' government controls over the collection, transmission and publication of news by the press and other mass media."[46] The report hastened to add that this notion of what the new order entails is suggesed by "leaders of independent news organizations" in Talloires and has been endorsed by the President and the Congress of the United States.[47]
Besides endorsing the Declaration of dTalloires, the ad hoc group invited the United States to adopt a harder line at the United Nations:

> We believe the time has come to reassess the capacity of UNESCO and certain other UN agencies, to function compatibly with their declared goals and purposes. Where politication, or gross inefficiency, has seriously impaired this capacity, and remedial efforts fail, the U.S. should consider alternative institutions if these efforts fail, we should not exclude the possibility of withdrawing financial support or even withdrawing from the agency.[48]

This is the "free flow of information" diplomacy of the 1940s in reverse.

MOTIVES AND ACTIONS

Not surprisingly, the current debate that has emerged from Third World complaints about the shortcomings of the present state of information flows is being resisted by the U.S. press and government.

The AP indictment of the European cartels in the 1940s is ironic in the context of today's debate when the U.S. news agencies dominate the flow of world information. Third World countries are advancing arguments today similar to those made by the U.S. government and press in the 1940s – developing nations are kept out of the competition by the monopoly of industrialized countries; international news agencies present the Third World disparagingly, when they do; those international agencies present their own countries favorably without contradiction.

At its founding conference, the United States was instrumental in assingning to UNESCO a role in communicationissues. In turn, the United States used the Organization as a toold for spreading Western ideology. Thirty-five years later, the relationship between the United States and UNESCO has cooled considerably. UNESCO is accused of "politization" and its competence over mass media issues are questioned.

Western defense, led by the United States, of the profit motive of mass media owners in the 1940s took precedence over the internal conflicts in the Western camp about who should dominate these instruments. In the current debate, there is a strong impression that the apparent Western front against the new information order is founded on this premise rather than on the intrinsic virtues of the "free flow" of information.

To this effect, the U.S. media not only do not treat the new world information order debate in an objective manner but also do not acknowledge or appreciate criticisms of their treatment of the debate.

The National News Council report analysis of Belgrade news coverage offers some insight into the overwhelmingly negative U.S. media reactions to the new information order debate and its forum, UNESCO. It indicates a strong relationship between the judgment of U.S. editors on what constitutes news about UNESCO and the perceived fears, expressed so unanimously on their editorial pages, about the possibly adverse impact on the press of UNESCO's attempt to achieve global consensus on problems of international communications. Material was sifted out by reporters, then the process was reinforced by gatekeepers at the foreign desks to discard stories that did not highlight the conflict angle.

One does not need to question the sincerity or even the validity of the apprehensions held by U.S. editors and publishers on the direction in which UNESCO is heading to point out that the apparent reflection of these concerns in the decison of what to publish about UNESCO is "inconsistent with the spirit of detachment that is invariably set forth as the touchstone of sound news judgment."[49]

Furthermore, the selective and biased handling of the communications debate did not give the American public a sound base on which to judge the issue accurately. Worse still, this imbalance:

> ...sets a poor example for Third World journalists and other skeptics on what they should find admirable as a model of press freedom and immunity from government control in Western journalistic practice. [50]

Most importantly, this shody coverage of events exemplifies the very problem that triggered the debate over a new information order. William Steif, a Washington correspondent for Scripps Howard papers, commented, "my self-important peers are protecting their own interests much more than they are worrying about lofty ideals of 'press freedom' that they proclaim so fervently."[51]

It is therefore not a matter of not understanding the UNESCO communication decisions of recent years that prompts the U.S. press to write about them in terms of "censorship and tyranny" or view the debate on communication"through narrow parochial eyes instead of taking a broader historical perspective which would reveal the Third World's growing efforts to develop their own communication systems and gain control of their own resources" as Abel suggests.[52] Rather, it is for the purpose of "protecting their own interests" that the U.S. press adopts the crisis coverage approach that gives the impression that the Western world on the one hand and UNESCO and the rest of the world on the other are on a collision course over global communications issues.

It is normal that corporate media interests in the United States should be at odds with the demands for a new information order. It is also normal that the American government should defend those interests in U.N. forums when they are challenged by the diametrically differently interests and aspirations of most developing nations. But the basic U.S. public notion of the new order and even of UNESCO is founded on a biased view of reality.

Evidently,the new information order is not a scheme "to legitimize government controls" but an attempt to promote the decolonization and democratization of information capacities and contents, the question of controls being left for

each society to decide. Moreover, the new order is not designed, as has been claimed, "to license journalists." Recommendation No. 50 of the MacBride Report states specifically that "the commission does not propose special privileges to protect journalist in the performance of their duties, although journalism is a dangerous profession" and to propose anything beyong human rights "would invite the dangers entitled in a licensing system since it would require some body to stipulate who should be entitled to such protection."[53] As far as the MacBride Report is concerned, "Protection of Journalists" is but one of the issues requiring further studies.

The only other instance is when a French non-governmental organization proposed that a commission for the Protection of Journalists be established.[54] It would give journalists identity cards that could be withdrawn if they violated "generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics."[55] Thus, neither the MacBride Report, nor the UNESCO secretariat nor any member state has formally advocated the protection or licensing of journalists.

A clear impression emerges that the ethics-licensing controversy is a tool devised by the Western press to distract from the essence of the new information order. Suggestions and proposals are treated by the press as though they were laws ready for enforcement. Besides, those suggestions "to license journalists" in order to promote the professional integrity of journalists, and to develop a system of professional self-regulation are not different from suggestions made on the same subject in the United States. The Hutchins Commission and other groups in the United States have made proposals at various periods during this century to raise the standards of journalism by means of "government control" to an extent greater than has been suggested in the context of the new information order debate.

In 1946, for example, White and Leigh proposed a U.N. treaty calling for:

> ...the organization in all principal news centers of the world of foreign correspondents' corps with the strict self-administered codes of ethics; the requirement that all newspaper, magazine, and radio reporters and all authors and photographers (including newsreel cameramen) be members of these corps and bound by their codes...[56]

Such a call unmistakeably constituted a system for "licensing journalists." The U.N. centerproposd by White and Leigh "to scrutinize the observance of the provisions by the multilateral treaty"[57] is a solution involving much more governmental control than any current suggestion in this regard.

The point is that "licensing" has no place in the proposed new information order whereas, in the United States the idea has been around for decades culminating in proposed bills in Illinois (1913) and Oklahoma (1923),[58] and even a statute in Missouri.[59] All journalists in the United States covering presidential campaigns, press conference or political conventions must apply for accreditation or register for a press identification both of which a journalist can be denied.[60] Foreign journalists must comply with formal visa requirements, which may also be refused by the U.S. government.[61] In this respect, it can be said that licensing is already in practice in the U.S. Yet, Western nations, led by the United States, have accused UNESCO of entertaining such schemes.

The dangers of the present double standards by the United States, in the debate over international communications, were clearly pointed out in a report by the International Communications Agency in 1979.[62] It noted, for instance, that the United States has been a massive supplier of media productsto the rest of the world, but it uses very few foreign media products itself. International nws reaches the United States largely through AP and UPI. The U.S. television system is the second most "closed" to foreign programming in the world. "These facts, deriving from the success and dynamism of U.S. private media, may limit our ability to see the world (and ourselves) through others' eyes."[63]

When that limitation is accompanied by the need to defend a profit motive interest, perception of the world can be totally distorted. The campaign of the U.S. mass media has emasculated the fundamental purposes of the new world information order concept. The reception given the National News Council Report is a further indication of the U.S. media's determination to undermine criticism of their performance. Unless this attitude changes, the American public will continue to receive coverage that is incomplete by the very standards which its mass media claim they are fighting to preserve.

Backed by the administration, this media campaign became the joint strategy of both the U.S. government and the press for dealing with the idea of the new world information order. Coupled with the threat of withholding financial support or even withdrawing from UNESCO, it has torpedoed concrete action toward the new order.

Nordensteng suggests that this strategy has been determined by the balance of political forces on a world scale, putting the United States and the West on the defensive as a minority partner in the international community.[64] The three-pronged strategy entailed portraying the new order as part of an Orwellian design, gently blackmailing UNESCO offering assistance to Third World media facilities and training as carrots.[65] The Talloires working papers called this offer of assistance "trading ideology against cooperation," a plan that constituted the basis for the U.S. interest in the I.P.D.C.

But the IPDC is far from what it was intended to be by those who initiated it. The U.S. government, which had made a favorable assessment of the Belgrade Conference,[66] apparently changed its mind after others concluded that the West had been trapped by the policy of consensus and that the time had come to put an end to a "false truce."[67]

Under these circumstances, Nordenstreng suggests that Western reluctance to participate in financing the IPDC was not surprising: "Why should they pay for music that does not follow their tune?"[68]

CONCLUSION

The U.S. mass media and government actions can be seen as reluctance to support a course that, though just, seems to counter their economic and political interests. All the ado about limitations to press freedom can be seen as smokescreens for safeguarding the **status quo**. As one U.S. official put it, referring to his country's media, "It is, after all, freedom for their activities that we all want to preserve."[69]

It is worth noting that the U.S. sells more goods to developing countries than to Western Europe and Japan combined.[70] U.S. media therefore need the fast growing Third World markets just as much as the latter need U.S. assistance to build viable communications systems and effectively participate in the exchange of information across continents. If America is to maintain and expand its trade with

developing countries, it has to be more sensitive to their problems than it has been in the new world information order debate.

In the final analysis, the strength of the communications debate is that its goals are inseparable from the universal values of justice and equality that the international community is seeking to establish on a global scale. That probably explains why its opponents are at odds with the UN system as a whole.

FOOTNOTES

1. J.J. Servan Schrieber, **The American Challenge** (New York: Avon, 1968).
2. When, as it is the case today, the U.S. is challenged, Servan Schrieber calls it "the world challenge." See Servan Schrieber, **op. cit.**
3. Herbert I. Schiller, **Communication and Cultural Domination** (New York: International Arts Sciences Press, Inc., 1976), p. 24.
4. Schiller, **op. cit.**, p. 26.
5. Kent Cooper, Barriers Down (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942).
6. Ibid, p. 43.
7. Schiller, **op. cit.**, p. 28.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 29.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
12. Ibid, p. 31.
13. UNESCO charter.
14. Joseph A. Mehan, "UNESCO and the U.S.: Action and Reaction," in **Journal of Communication**, Autumn 1981: 159-163, p. 160.
15. Ibid.
16. Cited in Mehan, p. 160.
17. Ibid.
18. Schiller, **op. cit.**, pp. 37-38.
19. Cited in Mehan, **op. cit.**, p. 160.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., p. 161.
22. Ibid.
23. Charles W. Bray III, Deputy Director of the International Communication Agency. Speech made before the School of Journalism and Media Representatives, University of Seattle, Washington, April 11, 1980, p. 2.
24. Diana Pabst and Robert Picard, "The New World Information Order in Perspective," **FOI Digest** September-October 1981, Vol. 23, No. 5, p. 5.
25. Ibid.
26. Lawrence Schneider "Abel Sets Record Straight on UNESCO," **Editor and Publisher**, November 8, 1980, p. 11.
27. "The MacBride Report," **Editor and Publisher**, May 17, 1980, p. 8.
28. Ibid.
29. "Press Groups Denounce UNESCO Plan on Media," **Editor and Publisher**, June 7, 1980, p. 11.
30. Ibid.
31. Bray III, Speech before the School of Journalism, p. 8.
32. "World Press Group Seeks Lower Rates," **Editor and Publisher**, June 23, 1979, p. 18.
33. William F. Fore, "A New World Order in Communications," **The Christian Century**, April 14, 1982, p. 443.
34. Ibid.
35. Mehan, **op. cit.**, p. 160.
36. A.H. Raskin, "U.S. News Coverage of the Belgrade UNESCO Conference," **Journal of Communication**, Autumn 1981: 164-174.
37. Cited in Raskin, **op. cit.**, p. 167.
38. Leonard R. Sussman, "Illusions at Belgrade: UNESCO," **Freedom at Issue**, January-February, 1981.
39. Freedom House and the Inter-American Press Association are affiliated to the World Press Freedom Committee.
40. Sussman, **op. cit.**
41. Raskin, **op. cit.**, p. 167.
42. Mehan, **op. cit.**, p. 163.
43. Bray III, speech to School of Journalism, p. 3.
44. Clifford H. Block, "Promising Step at Acapulco: U.S. View," **Journal of Communication**, September 198, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 65.
45. Ibid.
46. United States Policy toward the United Nations ad hoc group "The United States and the United Nations . . . A Policy Today," October 198[illegible], Mimeo released on March 16, 1982, p. 16.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid, p. 17.
49. Raskin **op. cit.**, p. 173.
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51. William Steif, "On the 'objective press'", **The Progressive**, 43, January 1979, p. 23.
52. Schneider, "Abel Sets Record Straight on UNESCO," p. 11.
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54. Singh Kusum and Betram Gross, "MacBride: The Report and the Response," **Journal of Communication, 1981, p. 113.**
55. **Ibid.**
56. **L. Winte and R.D. Leigh, Peoples Speaking to People, A Report on International Mass Communication from the Commision on Freedom of the Press (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 108.**
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62. Jonathan Gunther, The United States and the Debate on the World "Information Order," Washington, D.C.: Academy for Educational Development, 1979.
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65. Ibid, pp. 56-57.
66. A U.S. Department of State assessment of the information and Communication issues of the UNESCO General Conference at Belgrade, September 23-October 28, 1980, prepared under the direction of Sara Godda d Power.
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68. Nordenstreng, p. 54.
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70. Michael Radnor and Afud Wad, "U.S. Cooperation with the Third World," **The New York Times**, September 27, 1980, p. 21.

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